



## Board Report

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**File #:** 20-655, **Version:** 1

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Receive a presentation from The Gonzales Youth Council (GYC) on the recently implemented participatory research study with the help of adult allies and research partners from CSUMB, and their assessment on how well Gonzales youth were coping with the COVID-19 pandemic as they merged into distance learning and the effects that the transition has had on their mental health.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

Receive a presentation from The Gonzales Youth Council (GYC) on the recently implemented participatory research study with the help of adult allies and research partners from CSUMB, and their assessment on how well Gonzales youth were coping with the COVID-19 pandemic as they merged into distance learning and the effects that the transition has had on their mental health.

**SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:**

The Gonzales Youth Commissioners and Council (GYC) is a youth-led group supported by the City of Gonzales and Gonzales Unified School District. Since its establishment in 2013, it has pioneered a myriad of projects such as the adoption of the Social Host Ordinance in 2017, the No Straw November Campaign in 2017, and it has led the conversations on establishment of a local Teen Innovation Center. The current GYC identified mental health as a priority area this year. They implemented several strategies including efforts focused on reduction of stigma, the promotion of resources and access through a social media campaign and most recently, implemented a participatory research study with the help of adult allies and research partners from CSUMB. They wanted to assess how well Gonzales youth were coping with the COVID-19 pandemic as they merged into distance learning and the effects that the transition had on their mental health, if any. Initially, the GYC wanted to host a round of workshops for youth (mainly high school and middle school students) to better understand signs of depression and/or anxiety and how to help.

There were numerous discussions on this project with city and school leaders and had a timeline of when these workshops could happen, then the pandemic struck, schools were shut down for in-person instruction, and everyone was forced into shelter-in-place. GYC continued to have regularly scheduled meetings, and eventually made the decision that it was even more important to continue with the assessment now that everyone was at home, isolated. The survey included questions such as: How are students staying motivated and What have been some of the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic? Students were also asked to list three things they were grateful for, in hopes of reminding them that even though they are experiencing difficult times, they still have things to be thankful for. The survey was disseminated to middle and high school students on the 18th of May and closed on the 22nd of May. The data analysis was conducted by CSUMB. A total of 339 respondents participated in the survey. The data analysis found that while some students were coping well, the majority of them were under considerable stress and even a bit depressed. However, all respondents had things to be grateful for, and we hope that in answering the survey they were also reminded of that.

The GYC will be sharing the survey results widely to help inform decision makers and their strategies for online learning as well as their practices to better support young people who are having to deal with so much during this time. The City of Gonzales also plans to help forge connections with local partners as well as the Health Department to bring additional mental health resources to the community especially in light of the fact

that the Health Department is currently working on a Health Assessment for the City of Gonzales.

This work supports the Monterey County Health Department 2018-2020 Strategic Plan initiatives: 1. Empower the community to improve health through programs, policies, and activities; and 2. Enhance community health and safety by emphasizing prevention. It also supports the following of the ten essential public health services, specifically: 1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems, 3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues, and 4. Mobilize community partnerships and actions to identify and solve health problems.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The City of Gonzales works very closely with the Health Department on advancing health in all policies efforts in their city.

FINANCING:

There is no financial impact resulting from receipt of this presentation.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

Economic Development:

- Through collaboration, strengthen economic development to ensure a diversified and healthy economy.

Administration:

- Promote an organization that practices efficient and effective resource management and is recognized for responsiveness, strong customer orientation, accountability and transparency.

Health & Human Services:

- Improve health and quality of life through County supported policies, programs, and services; promoting access to equitable opportunities for healthy choices and healthy environments in collaboration with communities.

Infrastructure:

- Plan and develop a sustainable, physical infrastructure that improves the quality of life for County residents and supports economic development results.

Public Safety:

- Create a safe environment for people to achieve their potential, leading businesses and communities to thrive and grow by reducing violent crimes as well as crimes in general.

Prepared and Approved by:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Elsa Jimenez, Director of Health, 755-4526

Attachment:

Presentation is on file with the Clerk of the Board